

I CLAIM:

1. A computer-implemented method for diagnosing a malfunction in a printer system using a computer system comprising a processor, the method comprising the steps of:

5 communicating a description of one or more symptoms of the printer system malfunction to the processor;

correlating the one or more symptoms with known printer system malfunctions;

10 identifying a most appropriate malfunction that would produce the described symptoms; and

reporting the most appropriate malfunction.

15 2. The method of claim 1, where the description of the one or more symptoms includes an error log recorded by the printer system.

20 3. The method of claim 2, where the printer system includes a printer input device, and the error log includes input device errors.

4. The method of claim 3, where the printer system includes a printer output device, and the error log includes output device errors.

25 5. The method of claim 1, where the description of one or more symptoms of the printer system malfunction is received from the printer system.

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6. The method of claim 1, where the description of one or more symptoms of the printer system malfunction is received from the printer system operator.

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7. The method of claim 1, where the step of communicating includes sending a query from the processor to the printer system and receiving descriptions of one or more symptoms of the printer system malfunction from the printer system.

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8. The method of claim 1, where the step of reporting includes electronically transmitting a report.

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9. The method of claim 8, where the report is electronically transmitted via a communications connection with a printer service facility.

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10. The method of claim 9, where the report includes a service procedure recommendation.

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11. The method of claim 10, where the service procedure is a part replacement.

12. The method of claim 1, where the processor is accessible via an Internet connection.

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13. A system for diagnosing a malfunction in a printer system, comprising:
a database correlating symptoms of printer system malfunctions with known
printer system malfunctions; and

5 a processor configured to collect a description of one or more symptoms of a
present printer system malfunction to compare the one or more symptoms of a present
printer system malfunction to the database correlations, to identify a most appropriate
malfunction that would produce the described symptoms, and to report the most
appropriate malfunction.

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14. The system of claim 13, where the processor is directly or indirectly
linked to the printer system.

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15. The system of claim 14, where the printer system is configured to
record an error log, and where collection of the description of one or symptoms of a
present printer system malfunction includes downloading the error log from the
printer system.

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16. The system of claim 15, where comparing the one or more symptoms
of a present printer system malfunction to the database correlations includes
comparing the error log to the database correlations.

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17. The system of claim 13, where reporting the most appropriate
malfunction includes electronically transmitting a report.

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18. The system of claim 13, where reporting the most appropriate malfunction includes a service procedure recommendation.

5 19. A computer-implemented method of enabling the user of a printer system to diagnose a malfunction of the printer system using a processor, the method comprising the steps of:

communicating a description of one or more symptoms of the malfunction to the processor;

10 comparing the described symptoms to a database correlating symptoms with known printer system malfunctions;

identifying the malfunction most likely to produce the described symptoms; and

15 reporting the most likely malfunction to the user.

20 20. The computer-implemented method of claim 19, where the processor is directly or indirectly linked to the printer system, and the description of one or more symptoms of the malfunction is a printer system error log.

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